



Written Testimony on HB 2518

Written to House Health and Human Services Committee

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Chairman Hawkins, Vice Chair Dove and members of the committee, I am Elizabeth Saadi, PhD, with the Bureau of Epidemiology and Public Health Informatics, for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). Thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral, written testimony for House Bill 2518.

Registering Kansas death events is a core function of state government. Electronic processing of vital event records is a rapid, more accurate and secure way to meet reporting requirements. Conversion from paper-based to electronic filing of vital event records has been a national initiative since the early 2000s with varying levels of automation available in 54 jurisdictions. Electronic processing of vital events has contributed significantly not only to assuring records are available to assist families but also in preventing fraud and identity theft. To date, 14 jurisdictions have statutory mandates requiring the use of electronic registration systems for death record processing with several initiatives being proposed in 2016.

KDHE developed the Vital Statistics Integrated Information System (VSIIS) for electronic filing of Kansas vital events which went live in January, 2005. Initially, processing for death and stillbirth records required people who report to provide key information through the web-based system but then required printing documents for medical certification of the causes of death. Participation in the web-based system is voluntary. Volunteer recruitment activities focused on the top 300 physicians in Kansas who sign the majority of death certificates.

In 2010, a fully electronic process for medical certification for cause of death was established (Kansas' Electronic Death Registration System or EDRS) which removed the need to print documents and physically transport or mail them. This process significantly improved timeliness of death record completion and is estimated to save 3.6 days in processing time. To date, 303 Kansas funeral homes and 503 physicians use this system, all through voluntary participation. In addition, 116 funeral homes in border-states use Kansas' EDRS. Currently, 14 jurisdictions require participation for physicians for death records processing.

Timely reporting of death events is important for detecting pandemics and other calamitous events. To date, , 35.3% of death records are filed completely electronically, 9.5% are still filed in paper and 55.1% are filed in a mixed reporting method.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these written comments.